NSPCC

Working towards a safe online environment

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April 2022

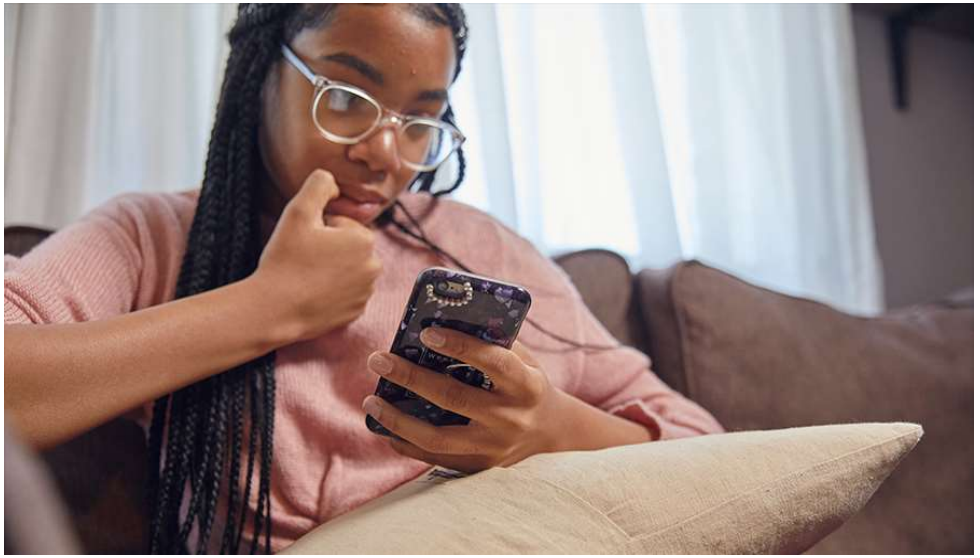
EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Content

- Children use of online spaces and the risk of abuse
- The road to legislation
- The Online Safety Bill and its objectives
- How regulation will drive online platforms to protect children
- Our next steps on the bill

Children's online usage

- 70 per cent of 12-15 year olds have at least one social media account
- Growing numbers of children have their own tablet or smartphone
  - 37 per cent of 8-11s have a phone, 49 per cent a tablet
  - Among 12-15s, 83 per cent have a smartphone
- Online access is a utility– it's how children communicate, learn and play
- 45 per cent of 8-11 year olds with a phone take it to bed with them



Source: Ofcom Children's media use and attitudes (2020/21)

Abuse risks increasing in scale and complexity

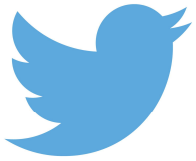
- On the main social networks, 200,000 children have sent, received or been asked to send sexual content to an adult (1 in 25 on Facebook)

- Grooming and child abuse image offences are record levels
  - 21,000 sexual communication with a child offences in 4 years

- Abuse images are a growing and increasingly complicated threat
  - 21million NCMEC reports, with 69 million images and videos

Harm is being caused on social media

- three quarters of grooming offences recorded between April 2020 and March 2021 involved Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp
- Companies know the implications of their choices but routinely fail to act or adequately risk assess the technologies.



The pandemic has made the risks worse

Three-fold perfect storm

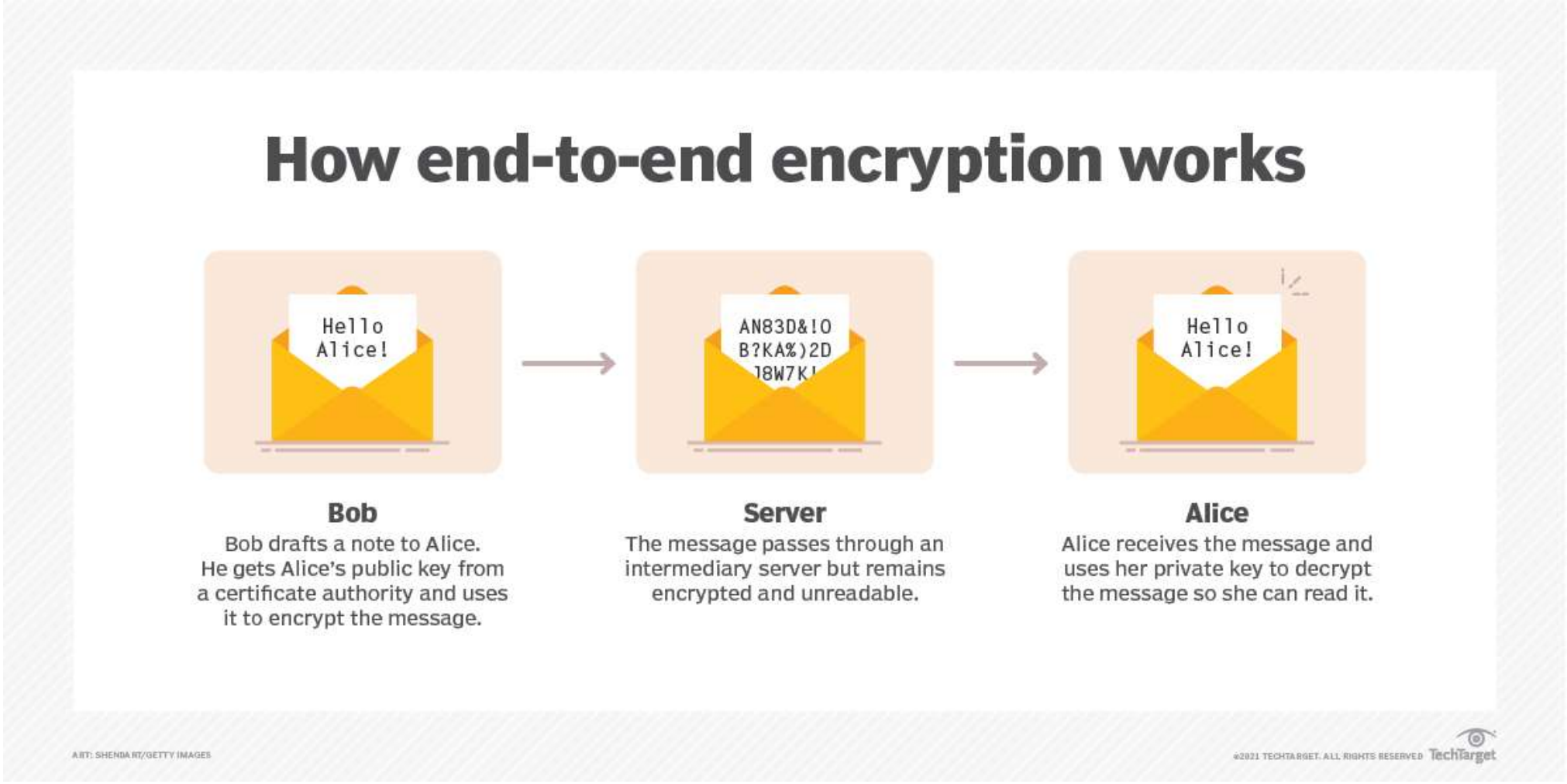
- Reduced moderation
- Sharply increased demand
- Significant increase in the abuse threat, with offenders looking to exploit vulnerabiities

Increased risk is a function of the public health crisis, but also poor systemic and safety design choices

Long-term: a structural change to the threat

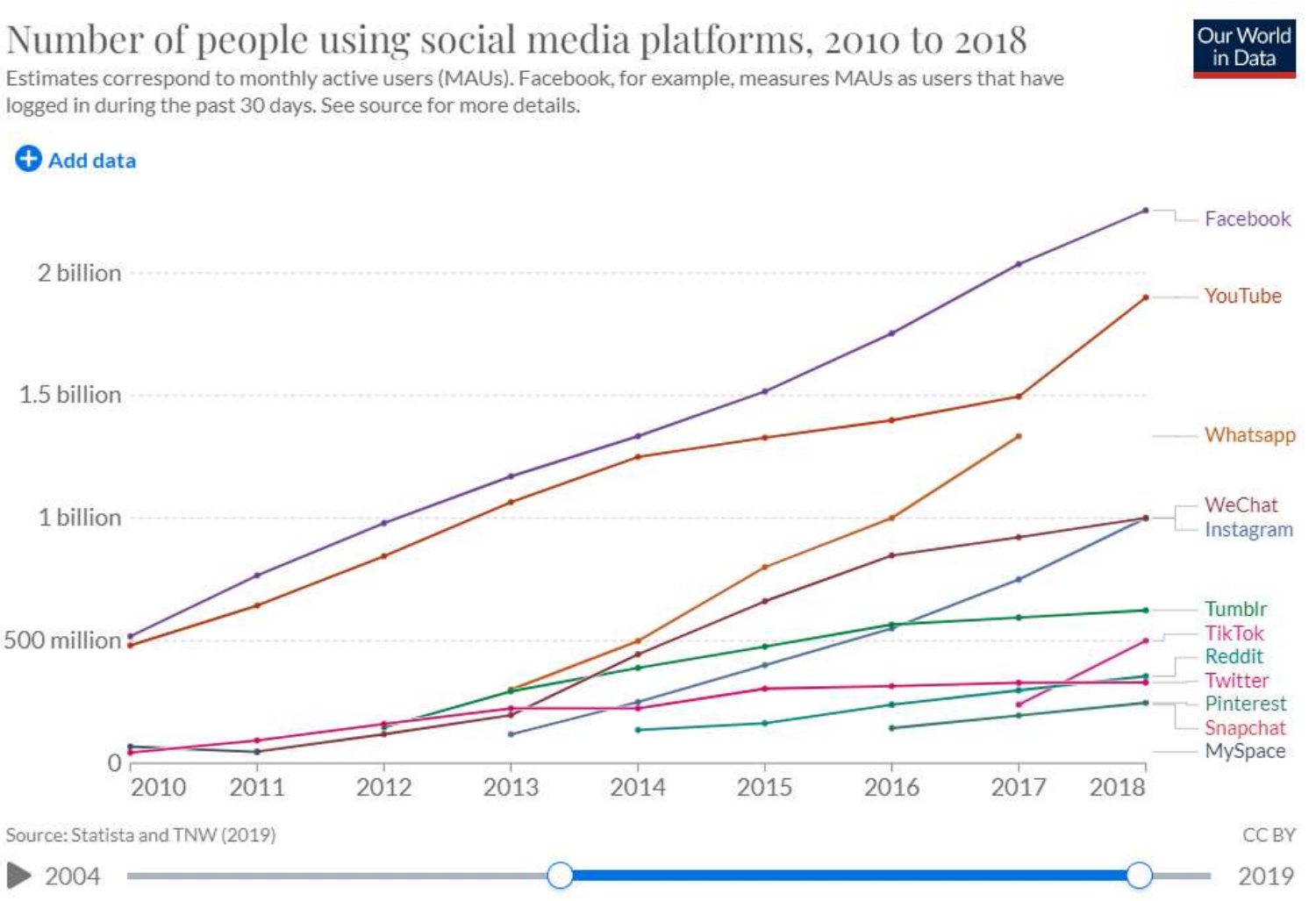
Underlines the importance and urgency of an Online Safety Bill

End-to-end encryption



Source: Tech Target

Future risks are unclear



Starting principles for regulation

- Platforms are not neutral actors – design choices exacerbate risks, but it's also here at *the systemic design level* where we can best address them
- Online should have the same protections are offline – the importance of equal protection
- Platforms have to identify foreseeable risks and take steps to address them, through the design and function of sites
- Platforms should be enforcing their own terms of services
- A successful Duty of Care needs to be hardwired into corporate decision making

Legislation must be unapologetically pro-child

- Children's needs consistently ignored in product decisions and discussions on internet governance

- **That needs to change:**

  - *Not the first time a market is failing its users , but children are inherently vulnerable*
  - *1 in 5 internet users are under 18 – their voice is legitimate*
  - *Companies should be made to balance the fundamental rights of all users, inc children*

How we've tackled the WildWestWeb

April 2017:

- NSPCC first calls for statutory regulation

April 2018:

- WildWestWeb campaign launches, Government agrees to legislate

May 2019:

- Online Harms White Paper

May 2021:

- Draft Online Safety Bill published

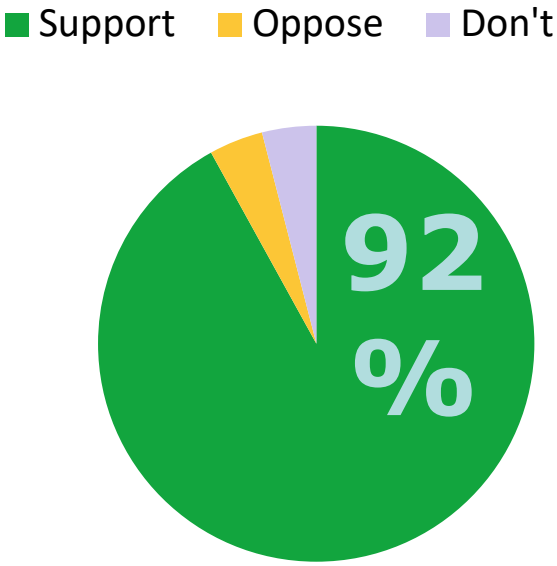
Late 2021:

- Parliamentary scrutiny begins

March 2022:

- The bill entered parliament

Over nine out of ten parents of children aged 11-18 support regulation of social networks to make them legally responsible for keeping children safe

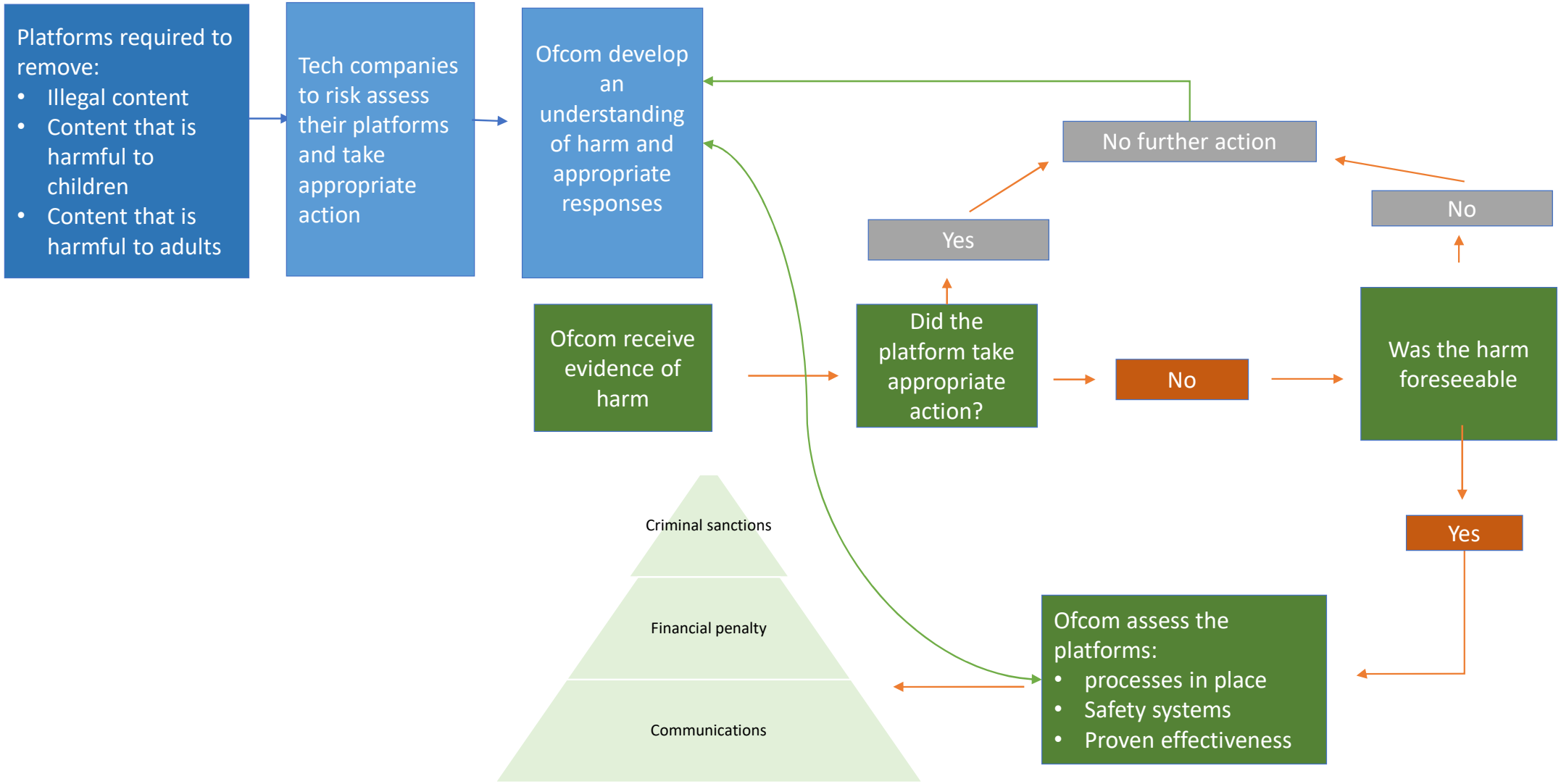


What's in and out of scope?

In scope	Out of scope
Regulating online services companies: • User to user / social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube, Snap, Twich, Twitter etc) • Search organisations (Google) • Online games • Porn companies	Journalism Online market places (Amazon, Ebay) Gambling
Ofcom regulating systems and processes	Regulating content
Platforms required to remove: • Illegal content (child abuse, terrorism) • Content that is harmful to children • Content that is harmful to adults	Journalistic content Democratic content
Protecting freedom of speech	

CR2

Online safety regulatory framework



Slide 14

CR2 What platforms are covered

"The very basics of the bill" - what is covered what is not covered

Simplify what it is

VR, Live streaming, Roblox detract

KE cover
Legal but harmful
Start from what they hear from front line
Do enable influence
What they do, and what they do to enable others
Resources for professional, parenets and carers, children
New vulnerable groups from the pandemi
Access point for support
COLLARD, Richard, 22/02/2022

What we expect to change

The online safety bill is not a silver bullet, however, we expect to see:

- Companies acting faster and more vigilantly to remove illegal content and content that breaches their terms and conditions

- Companies risk assessing new products and introducing harm mitigation strategies before implementing them

- Age assurance technology rolled out and age appropriate design of online services

- Greater controls to empower users to choose what content they see

Where the bill needs to go further

1. Regulation must have, at its heart, an expansive **principles-based Duty of Care**, capable driving cultural change

2. Regulation must meaningfully **tackle child sexual abuse**

3. The Duty of Care must meaningfully address **legal but harmful content**, including how content is recommended and disseminated to users

4. There should be **effective transparency requirements and investigation powers** for the regulator, with information disclosure duties on regulated firms

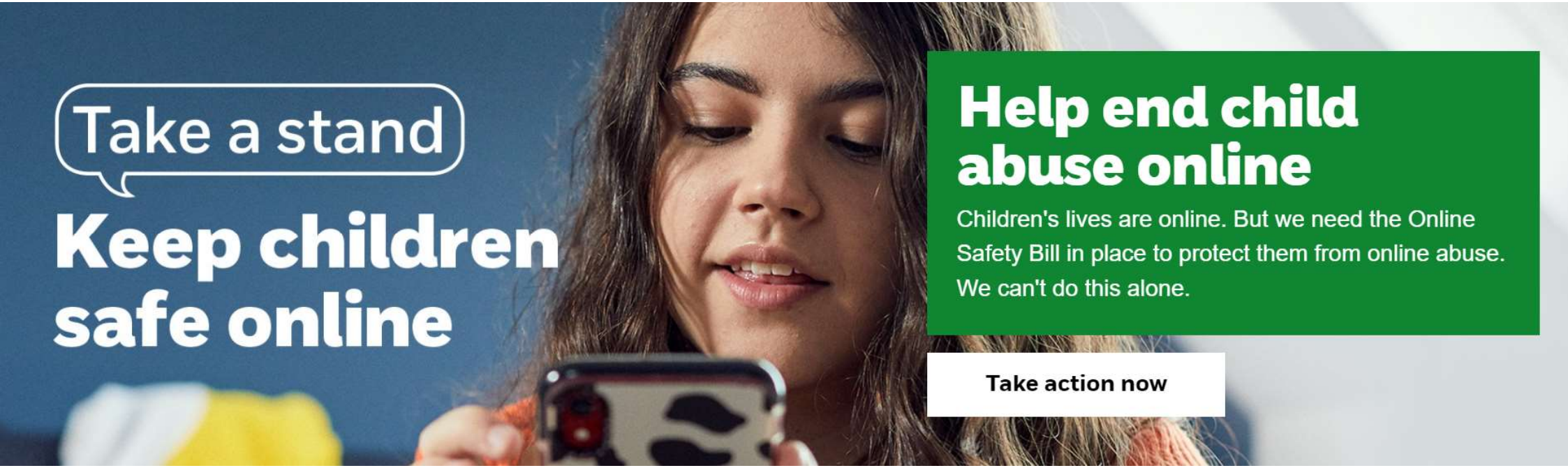
5. We need to see an **enforcement regime capable of incentivising cultural change**, which should include senior management liability for product decisions, and financial and criminal sanctions

6. There needs to be **statutory user advocacy arrangements for children**, including a dedicated user advocacy body funded by the industry levy, so children have a powerful voice that counterbalances that of industry

Our asks of Government

The Bill must:

- Tackle the ways in which child abuse is facilitated at scale on social networks (‘child abuse breadcrumbing’)
- Introduce duties for platforms to tackle cross platform child abuse and grooming pathways
- Proactively tackle significant child abuse risks in private messaging
- Ensure the child safety duty covers all services likely to be accessed by a child, to prevent harm being displaced to smaller sites
- Introduce a statutory user advocacy body to protect children’s interests in online harms regulation
- make senior managers of in-scope services personally liable for implementation of the duty of care, not just compliance with information requests

What next?

- We've come a long way, but it's a tough fight ahead
- We need your support - https://bit.ly/3K8IST6